

NDACT wants food, water issues included in 2018 election campaign

By Marni Walsh

The North Dufferin Agricultural and Community Taskforce (NDACT) is asking Ontarians to focus on food and water issues as the politicians begin to gear up for the 2018 provincial election.

The task force is launching a campaign to make sure all politicians seeking election make the preservation of our valuable farmland and source waters a #1 election priority.

Alia Jalbert, the new Chair of NDACT and its legacy movement Food & Water First, says, "If there is one thing that has been a human characteristic throughout history, it is ingenuity; the easy path, in many ways, is to take over nice, cleared land for developments, but I am certain, as witnessed in Europe where there is much more reluctance to convert farmland into suburbs, that when that route is removed other ideas will emerge."

Ms. Jalbert says the most imminent threat to Ontario Farmland, and to Dufferin-Caledon specifically, is development, in a variety of shapes, outside of already established communities - housing developments, aggregate extraction, and other industrial uses of agricultural land.

She suggests residents press politicians on questions that focus on the preservation of food and water such as: "What to you consider sustainable growth? Without any political action, how do you see the current trend (virtually no farmland from Markham to Toronto any more) ever ending? What options are there for growth if farmland and environmentally sensitive land are removed from the growth equation?"

Provincial improvements have been made in recent years, largely due to organizations like NDACT working hard to keep preservation and protection issues in the political forefront.

"NDACT, and numerous groups like NDACT, track legislative changes (not the fastest process to follow) and ensure that government-promised changes take place," says Ms. Jalbert. "They also establish networks of like-minded organizations and dedicated individuals, which allows them to support and educate one another as new/regional challenges arise. These issues are complex and require the ongoing engagement of our citizens; membership in such groups is an extremely effective tool for demonstrating to government officials that these issues are, in fact, very important to a large number of Ontarians."

The new Chair added, "NDACT is continuing to monitor the amendment of the Aggregate Resources Act, to ensure that no community is ever again faced with the possibility of a Mega-quarry." NDACT continues its involvement and support of like-minded organizations, such as Land over Landings, Protect Mono, and Conserve Our Rural Environment (CORE).

"We are bringing Food & Water First to the fore as a campaign that we believe will have broad common support," she said, "once all Ontarians are educated about how untenable our current approach to development is."

For more information or to get involved contact participate@foodandwaterfirst.com or info@ndact.com